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Tami Hoag

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#2488105 in Books 2015-10-06Format: Large PrintOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.50 x 1.00 x 5.50l, .0
#File Name: 1594138737624 pages | File size: 30.Mb

Tami Hoag : Cold Cold Heart (Wheeler Publishing Large Print) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cold Cold Heart (Wheeler Publishing Large Print):

85 of 90 people found the following review helpful. 4.5 starsBy K. BranfieldCold Cold Heart by Tami Hoag is a very compelling and intriguing murder mystery. The unique storyline also provides an in-depth and interesting glimpse into the psychological and physical after-effects of traumatic brain injuries and PTSD. The resulting story is captivating and it is quite interesting watching the pieces of the puzzle fall into place.Lead protagonist Dana Nolan is the only survivor of sadistic serial killer but she is forever changed by her harrowing ordeal. Beaten, tortured and raped after her kidnapping, she managed to escape but she suffered a traumatic brain injury that she is still struggling to overcome. After months of intensive therapy, she is finally released from the hospital but she is far from healed. Dana has long and short term memory problems and she has difficulty handling ordinary, everyday tasks. No longer the sunny, confident, cheerful young woman she was before the kidnapping, Dana is dealing with anger and impulse control issues and her memory gaps leave her doubting her judgment.Danarsquo;s return to her childhood sparks renewed interest in her best friend Caseysquo;s long ago disappearance. On her first night back in town, Dana runs into Caseysquo;s ex-boyfriend, John Villante, who was a person of interest during the original investigation. John is a veteran who is fighting to make a life for himself following his discharge from the military, but his PTSD makes it difficult for him to hold down a job.Dana also quickly crosses paths with her first love, Tim Carver. Once the townrsquo;s Golden Boy, Timrsquo;s future did not quite go the way he planned, and he, too, has recently returned to their hometown. Now a deputy with the local police department, he is still charming and good natured and while he is sympathetic to Danarsquo;s situation, Tim discourages her from her investigation.But the most difficult change for Danarsquo;s family is her unexpected antipathy toward her stepfather, Roger. A state senator currently in a tight race for re-election, Roger has largely ignored Dana during her recovery and he is impatient with the changes in her personality. Their current interactions are antagonistic and his lack of understanding of her medical conditions leads to some very tense situations between the two.At first Danarsquo;s recollection of those long ago events is hazy, but she quickly begins to piece together the days leading up to Caseysquo;s disappearance. New information comes to light and her viewpoint of certain events changes, and leads her a very startling discovery. The murderer hatches a desperate plan to silence her and Dana unwittingly puts herself in danger as she tries to make sense of everything she has uncovered.Cold Cold Heart by Tami Hoag is a riveting novel that is impossible to put down. A large suspect pool, red herrings and unexpected twists and turns make it difficult to figure out the killersquo;s identity. Fans of the genre do

not want to miss this suspense laden and immensely fascinating mystery. I received a complimentary copy for review. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The best By Marjorie L. Bennett I wish I could give this book 10 stars! I've read many of Tami Hoag's books and I enjoyed them all, but this has to be the best book of fiction I ever read, not because of the plot so much. Many books of a similar venue have been written by authors every bit as good. I'm sorry if that disappoints you but you already know it's true. What makes this one stand out above the rest is, I could almost feel Dana's emotions. I had to keep reminding myself I was reading a book, and not actually experiencing it. You did a great job of bringing Dana to life as a 3 dimensional person. Warning if you're an empath take heed. This book will make you feel like you're living it. Excellent book 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not cold at all! By ninamarina I have loved everything I have ever read by Tami Hoag including this story but this novel felt deeper, more heartfelt and personal than any of her previous books. When I read the postscript I understood why. What a brilliant idea to weave the current hot button topics of PTSD and Concussion injuries into a thrilling and deeply moving story - I couldn't put this book down and stayed up late reading to the very end. Now I want to know what happened to John and Dana after the book ended!!!

A thrilling novel from #1 "New York Times" bestselling author Tami Hoag, "one of the most intense suspense writers around" ("Chicago Tribune"). Dana Nolan was a promising young TV reporter until a notorious serial killer tried to add her to his list of victims. Nearly a year has passed since she survived her ordeal, but the physical, emotional, and psychological scars run deep. Struggling with the torment of post-traumatic stress syndrome, plagued by flashbacks and nightmares, Dana returns to her hometown in an attempt to begin to put her life back together. But home doesn't provide the comfort she expects. Dana's harrowing story and her return to small-town life have rekindled police and media interest in the unsolved case of her childhood best friend, Casey Grant, who disappeared without a trace the summer after their graduation from high school. Terrified of truths long buried, Dana reluctantly begins to look back at her past. Viewed through the dark filter of PTSD, old friends and loved ones become suspects and enemies. Questioning everything she knows, refusing to be defined by the traumas of her past, Dana seeks out a truth that may prove too terrible to be believed....

Praise for the novels of Tami Hoag "Cannily plotted and peppered with some of the sharpest dialogue in the business."--"Entertainment Weekly" (A-) "Eerie, suspenseful, tragic, and thought-provoking."--"USA Today" "Hoag's prose is martial arts quick and precise, her humor is high-voltage, and her insights into...the extreme psychosis of a serial killer are knowing and thought-provoking."--"Booklist" "Tami Hoag is a master of the suspense writing craft."--"Suspense Magazine" "Hoag's narrative explodes with an unexpected but believable conclusion. A top-notch psychological thriller."--"Kirkus s" About the Author Tami Hoag is the #1 international bestselling author of more than thirty books, including "The 9th Girl," "Down the Darkest Road," and "Secrets to the Grave." There are more than forty million copies of her books in print in more than thirty languages. Renowned for combining thrilling plots with character-driven suspense, Hoag first hit the "New York Times" bestseller list with "Night Sins," and each of her books since has been a bestseller. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Prologue She should have been dead. After everything he had put her through, she should have died hours before. There had been many moments during the ordeal when she wished she would die, when she wished he would just end the unimaginable suffering he was inflicting on her. He had done things to her she could never have imagined, would never have wanted to know one human being could be capable of doing to another. He had abused her physically, sexually, and psychologically. He had abducted her, beaten her, tortured her, raped her. Hour after hour after hour. She didn't really know how much time had passed. Hours? Days? A week? The concept of time had ceased to have any meaning. She had tried to resist physically, but she had learned resistance was rewarded only with pain. The pain had surpassed anything in her most terrible nightmares. It had surpassed adjectives and gone into a realm of blinding white light and high-shy; pitched sound. Eventually, she had ceased to fight and had found that in seemingly giving up her life, she was able to keep her life. Where there is life, there is hope. She couldn't remember where she had heard that. Somewhere, long ago. Childhood. At one point during the attack she had called for her mother, for her father. She had been overwhelmed with the kind of pure fear and helplessness that stripped away maturity and logic and self-shy; control, reducing her to a screaming mass of raw emotion. Now she couldn't remember ever being a child. She couldn't remember having parents. She could remember only the sharp pain of a knife carving into her flesh, the explosion of pain as a hammer struck her. She had tried to resist the overwhelming desire to break down mentally, to give herself over and drown in the depths of hopelessness. It would have been so much easier to just let go. But he hadn't killed her. Yet. And she wouldn't do the job for him. She continued to choose life. Where there is life, there is hope. The words floated through her fractured mind like a ribbon of smoke as she lay on the floor of the van. Her tormentor was driving. She lay directly behind his seat. He was happily singing along with the radio, as if he didn't have a care in the world, as if there wasn't a beaten, bloody, half-shy; dead woman in the back of his van. She was more alive than he knew. In giving up fighting, she had reserved strength. In giving up fighting, she had stopped him short of rendering her completely incapacitated. She could still move, though there was something wrong

with her coordination and every effort set off nauseating explosions of pain. Her head was pounding. It felt like her brain might burst out of her skull; or maybe it already had. She faded in and out of consciousness, but she could still form thoughts. Many were incomplete or incoherent, but then she would muster as much will and focus as she could, and something would make sense for a second or two. The cold floor beneath her was numbing some of the pain that racked her body. The blanket he had thrown over her to hide her offered a cocoon, a place to be invisible. Her wrists were only loosely bound together in front of her with a long, wide red ribbon. He had positioned her with her elbows bent, her hands tucked beneath her chin as if in prayer. Prayer. She had prayed and prayed and prayed, but no one had come to save her. He had all the power, all the control. He had killed before, many times, and gotten away with it. He believed he was invincible. He believed he was a genius. He believed he was an artist. He said she was to be his masterpiece. She didn't know what that meant. She didn't want to find out. The van hit a pothole in the road, jarring and rocking. She wanted to brace herself, to lessen the movement of her broken body, but the ribbon tied around her wrists prevented her. She strained against it for a few seconds, then stopped trying. The effort made her nauseous. As she rode the wave of the nausea, nonsensical words and images tumbled through her battered brain like the colored glass pieces in a kaleidoscope. As her consciousness dimmed, the glass shards of thought settled in a heap in her mind. The seductive voice of death whispered to her. She could just let go. She could go before she found out what he had in store. It would be so much easier. The tension started to seep out of her body. Her hands relaxed . . . and she felt the satin ribbon loosen around her wrists. . . . She put her concentration to the task of working a hand free. Where there is life, there is hope. Where there is life, there is hope . . . "You're gonna be a star, Dana," he called back to her. "That's what you always wanted, right? Network news. Your face on televisions all across America? You'll have that now, thanks to me. It won't be the way you imagined it, but you're gonna be famous." He cursed as the van hit another deep pothole. Dana's body bounced painfully on the van's floor. The pain rolled through her like a violent wave. She turned to her left side, curling into the fetal position, and tried not to cry out, not to make a sound, not to call attention to herself. Next to her, the collection of tools he had brought along bounced and rattled in their open tote. Not considering her any threat to him at all in her semiconscious, beaten, broken state, he hadn't bothered to put the tote out of reach. His ego allowed him to disregard her. She was little more than an inanimate object to him now. Her purpose was as a prop to prove his point: that he was smarter than any of the many law enforcement officers who were looking for him. They had offended him, crediting him with a murder that was sloppy; a careless crime, supposedly his ninth victim. He would show them his true ninth victim. He would present her to them as a work of art, tied up with a bright red ribbon. He was a serial killer. The police and the media called him Doc Holiday. These were facts Dana had known before he had abducted her. She didn't fully grasp any of the details now. The story had been boiled down to this: He was a predator and she was prey. And if she couldn't pull herself together and make one valiant effort, she would soon be dead. She had to do something. She had to summon as much will and life as she had left. She had to form a coherent thought and be able to hang on to it for just a moment. She had to fight through the pain to find the physical strength to execute that thought. It all seemed so hard. But she wanted to live. The fire of life had burned down to an ember inside her, but she wouldn't let it go out without a fight. Her brain ached at the effort to form and hold the thought. Her body protested and resisted the signals to move. Under the blanket, her right hand trembled uncontrollably as she reached toward the tote. In the front seat, he was still talking out loud. He was a genius. He was an artist. She would be his masterpiece. The media wanted to credit him with a victim who looked like a zombie? He would give them a zombie. Dana pulled her legs up toward her chest and shifted her weight, turning onto her knees. Where there is life, there is hope. Her head swam; her thoughts tumbled. She had to fight so hard to stay in the moment. She would have only one chance. He laughed at his own joke. He glanced in the rearview mirror as if to see if she had heard him. His smile died as his eyes met the eyes of his zombie. With all the strength she had left in her body, Dana swung her arm and buried the screwdriver to the hilt in his temple. Then everything went black, and she was falling and falling and falling into a darkness that swallowed her whole. January Hennepin County Medical Center Minneapolis, Minnesota; She woke screaming. Screaming and screaming and screaming. Loud, long, terrible screams that tore up her throat from the depths of her soul. She didn't know why she was screaming. There was no emotion attached to it, not pain, not fear. She seemed completely detached from the noise coming out of her. She had no awareness of her body. It was as if the essence of her being had taken up residence inside an empty shell. She couldn't feel. She couldn't move. She couldn't see. She didn't know if her eyes were open or closed or gone. She could hear the commotion of people rushing around her. She didn't know who they were. She didn't know where she was or why she was there. The people were shouting. She couldn't really understand what they were saying. Only one frantic voice penetrated as it shouted: Dana! Dana! Dana! The word meant nothing to her. It was just a sound. Like the screams coming from her own throat, these words were just sounds. She continued to scream and scream and scream. Then a sinuous sensation of warmth spread through her, and the screaming stopped, and she ceased to be aware of anything at all. "I know this was upsetting for you, Mommy." Lynda Mercer was still shaken and shocked by the sound of her daughter's screams, screams that had come from Dana's unconscious body lying perfectly still on the bed. Dr. Rutten motioned for her to take one of the two seats in front of

his desk. He took the other, choosing not to put a professional distance between them. In his midfifties, Rutten was Dutch, fit, and bald, with large, kind, liquid brown eyes. It was his habit to be close when he spoke to the anxious parents and spouses of patients, to reach out and touch with a large, reassuring hand. While the tactic could have seemed a phony, contrived intimacy, his kindness was genuine and very much appreciated. He was a rock for his patients and their families. He took her hand and gave it a squeeze. "After all the years I've spent studying the human brain, and with all the technology we've developed to help us in our study of the human brain, the one thing I can tell you with certainty is that there is no certainty with a brain injury," he said. "We can define the specific type of injury Dana has sustained. Based on our experience, we can attempt to predict some of the effects the injury might produce, some of the changes we might see in her personality, in her memory, in possible physical impairments. But there are no hard-and-fast rules about how her brain will react to the trauma." "She was screaming and screaming," Lynda murmured, her trembling voice barely more than a whisper. "Was she in pain? Was she having a nightmare? All the machines were going crazy." She could still hear her daughter's screams. She could still hear the shrill beeping and shrieking of the alarms on the monitors. Dana's heart rate had gone from a normal rhythm to a pounding pace. They had recently taken her off the ventilator, and she gulped air like a fish out of water. "The screaming is extremely disconcerting to hear, but not an uncommon occurrence for people with brain injuries at this stage of their recovery as they begin to climb their way out of their unconscious state," Rutten assured her. "Sometimes they moan or cry hysterically. Sometimes they scream." "Why does this happen? We believe this is caused by a misfiring of signals within the midbrain as it tries to cope and reroute itself. Neurons are firing, but the impulses are landing in strange places. Also, there can be heightened fight-or-flight responses caused by external or internal stressors, resulting in panic or combativeness." "People scream when they're in pain," Lynda murmured. Regardless of the neurologist's explanation, she couldn't escape the idea that her daughter was locked in a deep, unending nightmare, reliving the things a monster had done to her. Not just the skull fracture that had led to brain surgery to remove bone fragments, but also facial fractures, broken fingers, broken ribs, a fractured kneecap. Contusions and abrasions colored her body and her face. The killer the press called Doc Holiday had literally carved into her flesh with a knife. Imagined scenes from the nightmare flashed through Lynda's mind like clips from a horror movie. Ligation marks burned into Dana's wrists and ankles indicated she had been tied down. She had been tortured. She had been raped. "We immediately upped the amount of pain medication Dana is receiving," Rutten said. "Just in case some of that was the result of pain, but that may not be the case at all." "I shouldn't have left her," Lynda whispered, a wave of mother's guilt washing over her. She had left Dana's room for just a moment, needing to stretch her legs. Just a walk to the end of the hall, to the family lounge to get a cup of coffee. As she walked back, the first scream split the air and pierced her heart. She had dropped the coffee and run to the room, flinging herself into the melee of scurrying hospital staff. She had shouted her daughter's name over and over: "Dana! Dana! Dana!" until someone had taken hold of her shoulders from behind and pulled her out of the way. Dr. Rutten squeezed her hand again, pulling her out of the memory to focus once more on him. The corners of his mouth curved subtly in the gentlest smile of understanding and commiseration. "I'm a father myself. I have two daughters. I know how it tears at a parent's heart to think their child is suffering." "She suffered so much already," she said. "All the things that animal did to her . . ." "Dr. Rutten frowned. "If it gives you any comfort, she probably won't have any memory of what happened to her." "I hope not," Lynda said. If there were a God, Dana would remember nothing of her ordeal. But then, if there were a God, none of this should have happened at all. "Will it happen again?" she asked. "The screaming?" "It might. Or it might not. She could drift in and out like this for a long time, or she may become fully conscious tomorrow. She has been saying words these last few days. She's been responsive to vocal commands. These are positive signs, but every brain is different." "The kinds of injuries Dana sustained can mean she may have difficulty organizing her thoughts or performing routine tasks. She may become impulsive, have trouble controlling her emotions or empathizing with other people. She may have difficulty speaking, or she may speak perfectly but not always be able to grab the right words from her brain." "Damage to the temporal lobe of the brain may affect her memory, but how much? I can't tell you. She may have no memory of what happened to her. She may have no memory of the last ten years. She may not recognize her friends. She may not recognize herself. You may not recognize her," he said, unable to hide his sadness at a truth he had seen again and again. "She's my daughter," Lynda said, offended. "She's my child. Of course I'll recognize her." "Physically, yes, but she will never be exactly the girl you've known all her life," he said gently. "One thing I know is true in every case: The person you love will be changed from this, and that will be the hardest thing of all to accept." "In a way, the daughter you had is gone. Even though she may look the same, she will behave differently, look at the world differently. But she is still your daughter, and you will still love her." "You will have ahead of you a long and difficult road," he said. "But you will go down it together." "But she'll get better," Lynda said, as if phrasing it as a statement instead of a question would make it so. Dr. Rutten sighed. "We can't know how much. Every case is its own journey. This

journey will be like driving at night. You can only see as far as the headlights reach, but you can make it the whole way nevertheless. "You have to stay strong, Mommy," he said, giving her hand another squeeze. "You have to stay focused on what's positive." Lynda almost laughed at the absurdity of his statement. "Positive," she said, staring at the floor. The doctor hooked a knuckle under her chin and raised her head so she had to look him in the eye. "She shouldn't be alive. She survived a killer who had murdered who knows how many young women. She survived a car crash that could have killed her. She survived her injuries. She survived brain surgery. She's fighting her way back to consciousness. She should be dead and she's not. She's going to wake up. She's going to live. That's a lot more than I get to tell many parents." The weight of his words pressed down on Lynda as she wandered the halls of the hospital. She needed to find a way to be positive. Dana would need that from her when she finally rejoined the world and they began her journey to recovery. But it was all uncharted territory, and thinking about the enormity of it was daunting. She felt so tired and so alone, dealing with all of this in a strange, cold city where she knew no one. Her husband planned to come from Indiana on Fridays and go back Sunday nights. But even if Roger came to Minneapolis on the weekends, there was a part of Lynda that felt like he wasn't fully in this with her. Dana was her daughter, not Roger's. While Dana and Roger had always gotten along, they weren't close in the way Dana had been with her father before his death when Dana was fourteen. Dana's coworkers from the television station came by but were allowed only short visits. The doctor wanted Dana to rest most of the time, to keep stimulation to a minimum to allow her brain time to heal. Her producer and mentor, Roxanne Volkman, brought a box of items from Dana's apartment so she could have some familiar things in her room—a perfume she loved, her iPod, a soft blue throw from her sofa, a couple of photographs. Dana had been working at the station for only nine months. But even in that short time she had made a positive impression, the producer had told Lynda. Everyone appreciated Dana's sunny smile and go-shy-getter attitude, but none of them knew her well enough to be much more than acquaintances. The lead detectives assigned to Dana's case had come by to check on her progress. They would eventually want to speak to her, to find out if she could shed any light on the case. Even though the perpetrator was dead, there were still many questions left unanswered. Had Dana heard anything, seen anything, that might implicate the killer in other cases? According to Dr. Rutten, they would probably never find out. The female detective—Lisk—was a mother too. She brought Starbucks and cookies and lists of support groups for victims of crime and their families. They talked about the stresses and the joys of raising children. She asked Lynda what Dana had been like as a little girl, as a teenager. Lynda suspected that line of questioning was just a way to get her mind off the difficult present with stories of happier times. The male detective—Kovac—didn't have as much to say. He was older, gruffer, and had probably seen more terrible things in his career than Lynda would ever want to imagine. There was a world-weariness about him, a certain sadness in his eyes when he looked at Dana. And there was an awkward kindness in him that Lynda found endearing. In the aftermath of the crime there had been some public criticism of the police for not finding Dana or the killer sooner. Lynda didn't engage in it. The local and national media had been all over the case as soon as it was known that Dana was missing. It was a sensational story: the pretty fledgling on-air television newscaster abducted by a serial killer. It was an even bigger story when she was found alive—if barely—and her captor was found dead. As far as anyone knew, she was his only living victim. They all believed she would have an incredible story to tell when she finally came to. They hadn't considered that she might not remember any of it. Lynda hoped she wouldn't. Finally making her way back to Dana's room, she had no idea of the time of day or how many hours had passed since the screaming incident. As she went into the room she was surprised to see that the world beyond the window was already growing dim, as night seeped across the frigid Minnesota landscape. Darkness came early here this time of year. The pale, distant sun was gone by late afternoon. The screens of the machines monitoring Dana's vital signs glowed in the dimly lit room, chirping and beeping to themselves. She appeared to be sleeping peacefully. Lynda stood beside the bed, watching her daughter's chest rise and fall slowly. Her face was unrecognizable, swollen and misshapen, with centipede lines of stitches. Her head was bald beneath swathed gauze and the helmet that protected her in the event of a fall. Her right eye was covered with a thick gauze patch. The orbital bone and cheekbone had been shattered. The left eye was swollen nearly shut, and the black-and-blue seeped down into her cheek like a spreading stain. Dana had always been a pretty girl. As a child she had been a pixie with blond pigtails and big royal-blue eyes full of wonder. She had grown into a lovely young woman with a heart-shaped face and delicate features loved by the camera. Her personality had accompanied her looks perfectly: sweet and optimistic, open and friendly. She had always been inquisitive, always wanting to dig to the bottom of every story, to research the details of anything new and unfamiliar. Her curiosity had helped to shape her goals and had eventually led her to her career. Armed with a degree in communications, she had worked her way into broadcast news. She had only recently landed her first big job in front of the camera as a newscaster on the early-morning show of a small, independent Minneapolis station. She had been so excited to have the job, not caring at all that she had to leave her apartment at three a.m. to go on the air at four. Lynda had worried about her going out alone at that hour. Minneapolis was a big city. Bad things happened in big cities all the time. Dana had pooh-

shy;poohed the idea that she could be put in jeopardy going from her apartment building the few dozen yards to her car in the parking lot. She argued that she lived in a very safe neighborhood, that the parking lot was well lit. She had been abducted from that parking lot on the fourth of January, taken right out from under the false security of the light. No one had seen or heard anything. Lynda had come to Minneapolis as soon as she heard of Dana's possible abduction. But she hadn't been able to see her daughter until she was brought to the ICU after the surgery, a tube coming out of her shaved head, attached to a machine to monitor brain pressure. Tubes seemed to come from every part of her, connecting to an IV bag and a bag of blood. A catheter line drained urine from her bladder to a bag on the side of the bed. The ventilator was breathing for her, taking one vital task away from her swollen brain. Now the ventilator was gone. Dana was breathing on her own. The pressure monitor had been removed from her skull. She was still unconscious, but closer to the surface than she had been. It had been eerie to watch her these last few days as her mind floated in some kind of dark limbo. She had begun to move her arms and legs, sometimes violently, to the point that she had to be restrained. And yet she wasn't awake. She responded to commands to squeeze the hand of the doctor, of the nurse, of her mother. But she wasn't awake. She spoke words that suggested she was aware of the physical world—shy;hot, cold, hard, soft. She answered when asked who she was—shy;Dana. But she didn't seem to recognize the voices of people she knew, some she had known for years, if not her whole life. The physical therapist came every morning to prop Dana up in the chair beside the bed because movement was good for her. She would sit in the chair moving her arms and legs randomly, as if she were a marionette, her invisible strings being manipulated by an unseen hand. But she had yet to open her eyes. She stirred now, moving one arm, batting at Lynda. Her right leg bent at the knee, then pushed down again and again in a stomping motion. The rhythm of the heart monitor picked up. "Dana, sweetheart, it's Mom. It's all right," Lynda said, trying to touch her daughter's shoulder. Dana whimpered and tried to wrench away. "It's okay, honey. You're safe now. Everything is going to be fine." Agitated, Dana mumbled and thrashed and clawed with her left hand at her neck brace, tearing it off and flinging it aside. She hated the brace. She fussed and fought every time someone tried to put it on her. She tore it off every chance she had. "Dana, calm down. You need to calm down." "No, no, no, no, no, no! No! No!" Lynda could feel her own heart rate and blood pressure rising. She tried again to touch her daughter's flailing arm. "No! No! No! No!" One of the night-shift nurses came into the room, a small, stout woman with a shorn hedge of maroon hair. "She has a lot to say today," she said cheerfully, checking the monitors. "I heard she was pretty loud this afternoon." Lynda stepped back out of her way as she moved efficiently around the bed. "It's so unnerving." "I know it is, but the more she says, the more she moves, the closer she is to waking up. And that's a good thing." She turned her attention to Dana. "Dana, you have to rein it in. You're getting too wild and crazy here. We can't have you thrashing around." She tried to push Dana's arm gently downward to restrain her wrist. Dana flailed harder, striking the nurse in the chest with a loose fist, then grabbing at her scrub top. She rolled to her left side and tried to throw her right leg over the bed railing. Lynda stepped closer. "Please don't restrain her. It only upsets her more." "We can't have her throw herself out of bed." "Dana," Lynda said, leaning down, putting her hand gently on her daughter's shoulder. "Dana, it's all right. You're all right. You have to quiet down, sweetheart." "No, no, no, no," Dana responded, but with a softer voice. She was running out of steam, the brief burst of adrenaline waning. Lynda leaned closer still and began to sing softly the song she had rocked her daughter to sleep with from the time she was a baby. "Blackbird singing in the dead of night. Take these broken wings and learn to fly . . ." The words touched her in a very different way than they had all those years ago. The song took on a very different meaning. Dana was the broken bird. She would have to learn to fly all over again. She would have to rise from tragedy, and Lynda was the one waiting for that moment to arrive. Tears rose in her eyes. Her voice trembled as she sang. She touched Dana's swollen cheek in a place that wasn't black-shy;and-shy;blue. She touched the pad of her thumb ever so softly to her daughter's lips. Dana let go a sigh and stilled. Slowly her left eye opened—shy;just a slit, just enough that Lynda could see the blue. She was afraid to move, afraid to take a breath lest she break the spell. Her heart was pounding. "Welcome back, sweetheart," she murmured. The blue eye blinked slowly in a sea of bloodred where the white should have been. Then Dana drew a breath and spoke three words that shattered her mother's heart like a piece of blown glass thrown to the floor. "Who . . . ?are . . . ?you?"

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